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The

Place of Prayer

in

Missionary Work



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WITH the consideration of agencies, wheels, first and fifth, of all sorts of machinery, comes consideration of the power. Ponderous, mighty, is the great mass of iron we call an engine, almost unmovable by external agencies. But give it the inner power and it takes a whole street over the range of mountains, and all humanity up the grades of civilization and progress.

When one looks at the heathen world, terrorized by superstition, debauched by lust, debased by poverty, and horribly deteriorated by the worship of abominable gods, and then thinks of the perfect stature of manhood in Christ Jesus, and that this stuff is to be made into the royal perfectness of the children of God, every man asks, Who is sufficient for these things? And the answer inevitably is, no man. But hear the true answer: "Not by might, not by an army, but by my spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts." The point I wish to make is this: there is plenty of power provided in God's universe for the changing of these sinners into saints, for the changing of ignorant men into wise men, for the changing of men dead in trespasses and sins, into saints, alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Realm of Power in the World

Of course there must be a realm of power about this world or it would not exist. There must be

a source of power somewhere, or there would be none of these inferior powers. The powers that we handle, that we are proud to master, that we utilize for our advantage must have come out of some other realm. The might of gravitation, chemical affinity, cohesion, steam, dynamite, lightning, not one of these is sufficient either for its own origination or for its own continuance. Think of the crazy thought of men to have supposed that all earthly powers could have been envolved from a single potency of gravitation in the fiery star-dust of a cloud. Can we draw out from this force, the only one claimed to be in the universe, gravitation—can we draw out higher power, and still leave the other untouched? Can cohesion, chemical affinity, all possible mighty be drawn out of the lowest, and it still be as mighty as ever? Never. We are domed over, domed under, girt round and permeated through with a spiritual power out of which all others must come. We wonder that gravitation, in its might of swinging worlds, does not get weary and exhausted. Why not? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? Power out of him lasts through the millenniums unwearied and unwearable.

There have been mighty which we are incapable of measuring. This Bible is a record of things impossible to men: seas divided until a nation can go through dry shod; fire out of the heaven of such kind and fierceness as that it consumes common water as common water puts out ordinary fire; all kinds of mighty overmastering the lower mighty of earth. And these are as real as gravitation, as actual as any power we know of.

HOW MUCH SHALL I GIVE THIS YEAR TO MISSIONS?

A LITTLE ARGUMENT WITH MYSELF

(1) If I refuse to give anything, I practically cast a ballot in favor of the recall of every missionary, both in the home and foreign fields.

(2) If I give less than heretofore, I favor a reduction of the missionary forces proportionate to my reduced contribution.

(3) If I give the same as formerly, I favor holding the ground already won, but I oppose a forward movement. My song is, "Hold the Fort," forgetting that the Lord never intended that His army should take refuge in a fort. All of His soldiers are under marching orders always. They are commanded to "Go."

(4) If I advance my offering beyond former years, then I favor an advance movement in the conquest of new territory for Christ. Shall I not join this class? If I add one hundred per cent to my former contributions, then I favor doubling the missionary force at once. If I add fifty per cent, I say, Send out one half as many more; and if I add twenty-five per cent, I say to our Missionary Society, Send out one fourth more than are now in the field. What shall I do? I surely do not favor the recall of our whole missionary force, or of any part of it. Neither am I satisfied simply to hold our own so long as the great majority of the heathen world as yet have never heard of Christ. I do believe in greatly increasing the present number of our missionaries, therefore I will increase my former offerings to missionary work.

Knowledge of Power and its Existence

The fact that men do not know of this power militates nothing against its actual existence. For ages men walked the earth and never knew there was a gravitation. Men drank the sparkling water, saw it distilled as the gentle dew, saw it glorified in the rainbow, and never knew that every drop of it was full of the irrepressible power of steam. For ages men walked the earth interpenetrated with the might of electricity, and it is only to-day that it floods our homes with lights and hurls the cars along the streets. The fact that we did not know it for thousands of years is no argument against its existence and power; and the fact that men do not know there is a spiritual realm of might for the mastery of every other realm, does not militate against its real existence. So it is true that there is a realm of power over, under, around, within, a power for mind and heart, as really as there is power of gravitation for matter. And men can find their way into this realm and strengthened out of God, stand in the midst of every hostile influence, and say to the mighty king, in answer to his command to bow down, "We are not careful to answer thee, O king, in this matter, but be it known unto thee that we will not bow down." And armies of men, commands of kings, the touch of fire to the flesh, do not alter that will that is strengthened out of the realm of power where the Will is infinite and almighty.

Paul gives us a remarkable definition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: "It is power." This definition grows more clear, more forceful, by every realm of power into which we break and every realm of mastery into which we come. The Gos-

pel of Jesus Christ is greater power. This being true, how shall we find our way into that realm, a realm as real, as subject to law, as ready to work for man, as any realm that exists in the universe.

Things Impossible to Men

I said this book is a record of things impossible to men. But they have been wrought. Clouds of thunderous darkness and rumbling wrath brooded over Sodom; but the lightnings were leashed over the pits of slime while Abram prayed. On the top of Carmel Elijah knelt by the drenched sacrifice and said: "O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, Lord and God, hast turned their heart back again." Then fire fell that could consume water as easily as ordinary water puts out common fire.

Said Dr. Livingstone in Africa, "God had but one Son, and He was a foreign missionary." How did that Son conduct His campaign? For Himself? All night in prayer; dwelling in a realm of power surging about Him, thrilling His being. How did He apply it? On the top of the Mount of Transfiguration, He prayed, till glorified, transfigured, He shone in His original brightness. When the crisis hour came, all night again in prayer, falling on His face like Elijah on Carmel,—"If possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

He was about going away, leaving a few timid scattered disciples to turn the world upside down in the matter of morals and eternal hope. What

should be done for them? How could they be empowered? "Pray, pray the Father for the fulfilment of the promise of power." They obeyed. They gathered together in that upper room. Afterwards Peter addressed a great audience and gathered three thousand trophies in a day. Was it Peter's eloquence, logic, argument? No. The power was found in that upper chamber before he came to the ordinary audience. The same thing we find all the way along. Luther storms heaven; he is like Moses crying, "Lord, this, or blot my name out of Thy book." Wesley, John Knox—they show you in Edinburgh where his knees wore the very floor away as he said, "O God, give me Scotland, or I die." Livingstone, in the heart of Africa, about to be translated, uses not his last moments for preaching; he is in his tent on his knees. He storms heaven with his prayer till he cannot abide longer in the body, and he goes into the very *shekinah* to plead for Africa. And Hartzell and Taylor went there largely in answer, not to his might, nor to an army, but by the Spirit of God employed by the dying missionary in Africa's great heart.

The great agency in our revivals, our missionary work, is somebody's prayer that will not let God go until far in the morning, until the breaking of the light, except God bless and give souls.

The Real Power of the Missionary Movement

This, then, being the real power of the missionary movement, I bring this appeal. If I were to ask for money to set India afire, to kindle a flame in Africa, to give China all it wanted, you could not answer me. But I can appeal on a basis where every one can be a glorious helper in the mission-

ary cause. Every man can put his hand, not into the treasures of earth, but into the treasuries of heaven. Every lone woman in her garret or in her basement, can find her way to God, and as a result a great rushing wind of the mighty Spirit of Jehovah himself shall fill the world, not with might, nor with an army, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Shall we now vow ourselves to new earnestness of prayer, pledge ourselves, daily,—morning, evening, and night—to implore the court of Heaven that the spirit of the living God may be poured out and abide on all our missions far and wide.

O Lord, revive Thy work! Let the heathen be given to Thy Son for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession?

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